

**St Ignatios of Antioch
Melkite Greek Catholic Church
1003 Merry Street
Augusta, Georgia 30904
706 364-6219**



**23rd Sunday after Pentecost
5 November 2023**

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The Rich Man in Hades (Lk 16:19-31)

WOULD WE BE AFFECTED if someone rose from the dead? We would probably say “Yes,” but the Lord says “No.” What does He know that we don’t?

Throughout the centuries, and even today, many people have what might be called mystical experiences. They see visions and dream dreams, to quote the prophet Joel. Thus St. Paul experienced the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and it changed his life. Similarly St. Peter and the other disciples encountered Christ risen from the dead and proclaimed it throughout the world. These experiences energized their ministries and jump-started the spread of the Gospel throughout the ancient world.

Such experiences continued throughout Christian history right up to our own day. One well-known Christian thinker in the modern world, the Russian Orthodox bishop in London, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003) described his encounter with the Lord in these words:

“I met Christ as a Person at a moment when I needed Him in order to live, and at a moment when I was not in search of Him. I was found; I did not find Him.

“I was a teenager then. ... I could not accept aimless happiness. Hardships and suffering had to be overcome, there was something beyond them. Happiness seemed to be stale if it had no further meaning. ... I decided that I would give myself a year to see whether life had a meaning, and if I discovered it had none I would not live beyond the year. I had no use for Church. I did not believe in God.”

Under duress, young Anthony attended a religious lecture at the Russian youth organization. He was greatly disturbed by the lecture and asked his mother for a copy of the New Testament to check the truth of what the speaker had been saying. He describes what happened:

“I expected nothing good from my reading, so I counted the chapters of the four Gospels to be sure that I read the shortest, not to waste time unnecessarily. And thus it was the Gospel according to St Mark which I began to read.

“I do not know how to tell you of what happened. I will put it quite simply and those of you who have gone through a similar experience will know what came to pass. While I was reading the beginning of St Mark’s Gospel, before I reached the third chapter, I became aware of a Presence. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. It was no hallucination. It was a simple certainty that the Lord was standing there and that I was in the presence of Him whose life I had begun to read with such revulsion and such ill-will... This was my basic and essential meeting with the Lord. From then I knew that Christ did exist.”

PBS commentator Frederica Mathewes-Green tells of a similar experience. She was a vocal agnostic who had dabbled in Hinduism. In *Facing East – A Pilgrim’s Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy* (San Francisco, 1997), she describes her husband Gary as “a political animal who just didn’t think much about God.” She then tells how that changed:

“Gary’s shell began to crack when a professor required his philosophy class to read a Gospel. As he read the words of Jesus, he became convinced that here was one who ‘speaks with authority.’ Since Jesus said there was a God, Gary began to doubt his doubting.”

Frederica’s turn came on their honeymoon trip to Europe where the following took place:

“One day in Dublin I looked at a statue of Jesus and was struck to my knees, hearing an interior voice say, ‘I am your life.’ I knew it was the One I had rejected and ridiculed, come at last to seize me forever.”

What was different about these people compared to the brothers of the rich man in Christ’s parable?

Why “Few Are Chosen”

The apostles were religious people; they observed the precepts of Judaism as practiced in their day. Others were contemptuous of religion and had ridiculed it. Yet somewhere deep inside them was a search for meaning, a hidden disposition to faith, even if they were not practicing any religion at the moment. Thus, when these momentous experiences took place, they received them wholeheartedly and changed their entire way of life.

People who have no interest in God or in any kind of an interior life, who are content pursuing a materialist way of life might easily shrug off a spiritual experience as some kind of delusion. They might blame it on a touch of the flu or having too much to drink.

Similarly the rich man's brothers in the parable may have paid lip service to the Scriptures but the focus of their lives was far from the things of God. They would not even have heard a voice from the dead.

Christ's Alternative

A parable is a story with a moral, not a detailed history of an event. In this case, as in most, the moral is found at the end of the story. When the rich man in the parable asks Abraham to send Lazarus to shake up his brothers, Abraham says, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). In other words, they have the Scriptures – what we call the Old Testament – as their means of discerning the mind of God for them.

This saying, of course, is directed at us – it is the moral of the story. We are meant to base our faith on the mystery of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures rather than on some fantasy that the holy Virgin or an angel might visit us. Just as our daily life must be based on something more practical than a hope of winning the lottery, so our Christian life must have the solid foundation of the word of God to us.

We have not only the Law and the prophets, but the Gospels and Epistles. We have the witness of Christ and the apostles, the testimony of the martyrs and the ascetics. We have the power of the holy mysteries, the voice of our liturgical texts and the unspoken voice of the holy icons. These are the voice of the Lord to us – let us hear them in faith.

A Missed Opportunity

When people think about violating God's law they think about sins of commission: doing something prohibited like stealing, harming another, or the like. We often forget that sins of omission – things that we neglect to do – are often even more damaging.

The rich man in Christ's parable is not accused of any sin of commission. He is not blamed for being rich any more than Lazarus is praised for being poor: in itself having money is not a sin. We are not told how he made his money. He is not accused of defrauding people as Zacchaeus claimed to have done. The only thing he is accused of is not giving alms.

The poor man, Christ says, lay at the rich man's gate, hoping for scraps. It may be easy to ignore a panhandler on the street; it is not so easy to ignore him when he is at your doorstep day after day. Yet this is what the rich man did. He did not overlook abstract appeals from far-away charities; he passed by a flesh-and-blood person in need on his own doorstep, "the living creature," as St John Chrysostom describes him, "for whom God cares" (On Wealth and Poverty).

The Purpose of Wealth

One of the ultimate questions behind this parable is, "What is money for?" In the ethics of the world the answer is clear: money is there for us to buy more and bigger and newer and better. According to the Scriptures, however, though we walk in the flesh, we do not live according to the flesh. We know that our money is the Lord's, however we may have gathered it.

The purpose of money according to the vision of the kingdom of God depicted in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is set forth directly in St Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. He writes, "*God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work*" (2 Cor 9:8). Our resources are meant to provide us with "all sufficiency," meaning everything that we truly need, and "an abundance" – everything more than we need – for doing good. Does having multiple cars and homes or a TV in every room fall under the heading of "sufficiency"?

The rich man in Christ's parable may have felt that he "needed" every scrap he had acquired but, as St. John Chrysostom affirmed, he did not know what he needed it for: "If a person enjoys luxury in moderation and distributes the rest to the stomachs of the poor, then his wealth does him good. But if he is going to give himself up to luxury and profligacy, not only does it not help him at all, but it even leads him down to the great pit. This is what happened to this rich man" (*On Wealth and Poverty*).

Where Do We Encounter God?

Devout believers are convinced that they encounter God in worship – in the words of the Bible, in the Eucharistic presence. The Lord taught the very thing: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). When the Body of Christ comes together in worship – particularly in the Divine Liturgy – the Head is surely there as well.

But Christ also indicates another instance of His presence in our midst. He affirms that He is present in the needy of this world. In His parable of the last judgment Christ rewards those who fed and clothed Him, who welcomed Him or visited Him when He was sick or in prison. "Assuredly I say to you," He tells them, "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to Me" (Mt 25:40).

In the Liturgy we truly encounter the glorious Christ: the candles, the singing, the incense and the icons all point to Him as He is now: at the right hand of the Father, praised by the saints and angels. But in the poor we encounter the Christ who put aside His glory and took on our broken humanity that we might ultimately share in His divine sonship. The person in need is an icon of the humiliated Christ, the suffering Christ, the dying Christ – as much an icon of Christ in its way as is the Liturgy. Most of us find it easier to see the Lord of glory in the Liturgy. It seems to take a Dorothy Day, a Mother Teresa of Calcutta or a Father Damian of Molokai to see Christ incarnate in human weakness.

The late Catherine de Hueck Dougherty, daughter of a noble Russian family, tells of how her parents recognized the presence of Christ in the poor. "Early in my childhood, the truth that Christ is in my neighbor was shown to me by my parents' example and words. No one was ever turned from our door, bum or beggar, woman of the streets or thief. The men were welcomed by my father. He gave them a bath himself, or mother would do it for the women; then they would be given clothing if they needed it. They would be served by Mother and Father and by us children – if we had been good through the week and thus worthy of serving Christ in the poor – on our best linen and from our best china in the main dining room" (*My Russian Yesterdays*).

The baron and baroness had clearly learned what the rich man in Christ's parable had not: that the beggar at the gate is one whom God sends as a means for the salvation of the rich. As St John Chrysostom phrased it, "The Rich Man had in Lazarus an opportunity to learn virtue and to show forth love. Instead of accepting Lazarus' help, he betrayed himself with heartless greed and an unwillingness to share his own wealth... for nothing can so make a man an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbors.

Indeed, even though you fast, or sleep on hard ground, or even suffer unto death, but should take no thought of your neighbor, you have done nothing great; despite what you have done, you still stand far from this model of a perfect Christian" (On Wealth and Poverty).

Who is the Rich Man?

"If we are to tell the truth, the rich man is not the one who has collected many possessions but the one who needs few possessions; and the poor man is not the one who has no possessions but the one who has many desires. We ought to consider this the definition of poverty and wealth. So if you see someone greedy for many things, you should consider him the poorest of all, even if he has acquired everyone's money. If, on the other hand, you see someone with few needs, you should count him the richest of all, even if he has acquired nothing.

"We are accustomed to judge poverty and affluence by the disposition of the mind, not by the measure of one's substance. Just as we would not call a person healthy who was always thirsty, even if he enjoyed abundance, even if he lived by rivers and springs, (for what use is all that water when his thirst remains unquenchable). Let us do the same in the case of wealthy people: let us never consider those people healthy who are always yearning and thirsting after other people's property; let us not think that they enjoy any abundance. For if one cannot control his own greed, even if he has appropriated everyone's property, how can he ever be affluent? But those who are satisfied with what they have and pleased with their own possessions and do not have their eyes on the substance of others, even if they are the poorest of all, should be considered the richest of all. For whoever has no need of others' property but is happy to be self-sufficient is the most affluent of all."

~ St John Chrysostom, Second Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man

WE HAVE RECEIVED A VERY GENEROUS OFFER – during the season of the Christmas Fast (beginning 15 November) an anonymous parishioner has offered to match any donations we receive two to one. This is a wonderful opportunity to make your generosity to the parish count even more!

Sunday Collections

Attendance	Date	Collection
40	10 September 2023	618.00
31	17 September 2023	75.00
31	24 September 2023	0.00
27	1 October 2023	60.00
39	8 October 2023	\$1,192.00
40	15 October 2023	\$451.00
38	22 October 2023	
37	29 October 2023	

Divine Liturgy Intentions:

For the Living:

Bishop Francois, Fr. John Azar, Fr. James Graham, Fr. Michael Copenhagen, David Mangelsdorf, Brian Frank, Nookid Graham, Ali de la Vega, Dn. Kent & Diana Plowman, Mandie, Nick Baiad, Charlie & Kathleen Barnette, Alfonso de la Vega, Michael A Skrocki, Medical Personnel and First Responders

For the Dead:

Announcements

We are live-streaming on our Facebook page at the following days & times:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 8:00AM, The Third Hour

Friday – 6:00 PM Weekday Vespers

Saturday – 6:00PM Great Vespers

Sunday – 9:00AM Orthros & 10:00AM Divine Liturgy

JOIN US IN PRAYING the 3rd Hour on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8am. This is a short prayer service from our version of the Liturgy of the Hours. It lasts less than 20 minutes or so. Come join us!

PRAYER OPPORTUNITES AROUND TOWN –Most Holy Trinity parish will be hosting a Men's Holy Hour every Friday morning from 6-7am. There will also be a coffee hour and reflection time afterwards – Men from all parishes are invited to attend for whatever portion of the time they are available. For the Ladies – St. Joseph's will be hosting a Women's Holy Hour on the first Monday of each month at 7pm.

Resurrectional Troparion

(Tone 6)



The an - ge - lic Pow - ers were a-round Your tomb,



and the guards be - came as dead; and Ma - ry



stood at the tomb seek - ing Your spot-less bo - dy;



then You des - poi - led Ha-des with - out be-ing



tried by it, and You met the Vir - gin, O Be-stow-er of



Life. O Lord who rose from the dead, glo - ry to You.

Prokimenon

Reader: O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance!

All: O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance!

Reader: To You, O Lord, I have called; O my Rock, be not deaf to me!

All: O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance!

Reader: O Lord, save your people,

All: And bless your inheritance!

Readings for the Week:

Monday:	2 nd Thessalonians 1:1-10	Luke 17:20-25
Tuesday:	2 nd Thessalonians 1:10-2:2	Luke 17: 26-18:8
Wednesday:	2 nd Thessalonians 2:1-12	Luke 18:15-17, 26-30
Thursday:	2 nd Thessalonians 2:13-3:5	Luke 18:31-34
Friday:	2 nd Thessalonians 3:6-18	Luke 19:12-28
Saturday:	Galatians 1:3-10	Luke 10:19-21

Saints of the Week:

Nov. 5: Holy Martyrs Galaction and his wife Episteme
Nov. 6: Paul the Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople
Nov. 7: The 32 Martyrs of Melitene; our Father Lazarius the Wonderworker, Hermit of Mt. Galesius
Nov. 8: Synaxis of the Archangels Michael & Gabriel and all the Heavenly Powers
Nov. 9: Holy Father Nektarios the Wonderworker; Holy Martyrs Onesiphorus & Porphyry; and our Venerable Mother Matrona
Nov. 10: Holy Apostles Olympus, Rhodion, Sosipater, Tertius, Erastes & Quartus; Holy Martyr Orestes
Nov. 11: Holy Martyrs Menas, Victor, Vincent and Stephanida; our Holy Father Theodore the Studite
Nov. 12: John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria; Nilus the Sinaite

Word Search

J	B	Y	Z	B	S	G	Q	Z	X	S	S	E	S	O	M	C
S	S	P	Q	R	I	U	W	I	T	K	W	U	N	O	K	T
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Abraham
Brothers
Clothe
Comforted
Crumbs
Dogs
Finger
Gate
Gulf

Hell
Lazarus
Lifetime
Linen
Man
Moses
Parable
Poor
Prophets

Purple
Rich
Sores
Table
Tongue
Torments
Water

Parish Information:

Rt. Rev. Michael Skrocki, JCD
Pastor

abounamike@aol.com

Knights of Columbus
JFK Council

1st Wednesday of the month, 7pm
Most Holy Trinity

4th Degree Assembly
2nd Wednesday of the month, 7pm
St. Ignatios

Publicans Prayer Group
Postponed until Further Notice

New Parishioners:
Please register with Fr. Michael.

Mystery of Holy Confession
Please contact Fr. Michael to set up a convenient time.

Mystery of Christian Initiation
Expectant parents should notify Fr. Michael prior to the birth of the child. Adult converts should contact Fr. Michael so arrangements may be made for any necessary instruction and sacraments.

Mystery of Holy Crowning
Those planning to marry should notify the Fr. Michael
at least six months prior to the desired Wedding date.

Mystery of Holy Anointing
Please notify Fr. Michael when you or a family member is in need of anointing.

To report sexual abuse by clergy, parish personnel or volunteers of the Eparchy of Newton, please call the **Victim Assistance Coordinator** at 1-800-479-5910.